A Blow at the Root of Antinomianism

JOHN FLAVEL

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by John Flavel

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THE design of the following sheets, cast in as a *Mantissa* to the foregoing

discourse of *Errors*, is principally to discharge and free the free grace of God from those dangerous errors, which fight against it under its own colours; partly to prevent the seduction of some that stagger; and, lastly, (though least of all) to vindicate my own doctrine, the scope and current whereof hath always been, and shall ever be, to exalt the free grace of God in Christ, to draw the vilest of sinners to him, and relieve the distressed consciences of sin-burthened Christians.

But, notwithstanding my utmost care and caution, some have been apt to censure it, as if in some things it had a tang of Antinomianism: But if my public or private discourses be the faithful messengers of my judgment and heart, (as I hope they are) nothing can be found in any of them casting a friendly aspect upon any of their principles, which I here justly censure as erroneous.

Three things I principally aim at in this short *Appendix*.

1. To give the reader the most probable rise of Antinomianism.

2. An account of the principal errors of that sect.

3. To confirm and establish Christians against them by sound reasons, backed with scripture-authority. And,

I. *Of the rise of Antinomianism.*

The scriptures foreseeing there would arise such a sort of men in the church, as would wax wanton against Christ, and turn his grace into lasciviousness; hath not only precautioned us in general to beware of such opinions as corrupt the doctrine of free-grace, Rom. 6.1,2. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? "God forbid:" But hath particularly indigitated and marked those very opinions by which it would be abused, and made abundant provision against them; as namely,

1. All slighting and vilifying opinions or expressions of the holy law of God, Rom. 7.7,12.

2. All opinions and principles inclining men to a careless disregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under pretence of free grace, and liberty by Christ, James 2. Matth. 25.

3. All opinions neglecting or slighting sanctification, as the evidence {552} of our justification, and rendering it needless or sinful to try the state of our souls, by the graces of the Spirit wrought in us, which is the principal scope of the first epistle of John.

Notwithstanding, such is the wickedness of some, and the weakness of others, that in all ages (especially the last past, and present) men have audaciously broken in upon the doctrine of free grace, and notoriously violated and corrupted it, to the great reproach of Christ, scandal of the world, and hardening of the enemies of reformation. 'Behold,' (saith Contzen the Jesuit, on Matth. 24,) 'the fruit of Protestantism, and their gospel-preaching.'

Nothing is more opposite to looseness than the free grace of God, which teaches us, *That denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* Nor can it without manifest violence be made pliable to such wicked purposes; and therefore the apostle tells us, Jude 4. that this is done by turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness; μετατιθεντες transferring it, *scil fœda interpretatione*, by a corrupt abusive interpretation, to such uses and purposes as it abhors. No such wanton, licentious conclusions can be inferred from the gospel-doctrines of grace and liberty, but by wrestling them against their true scope and intent, by the wicked arts and practices of deceivers upon them.

The gospel makes sin more odious than the law did, and discovers the punishment of it in a more severe and dreadful manner, than ever it was discovered before. Heb. 2.2,3. "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience, received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It shews our obligations to duty to be stronger than ever, and our encouragements to holiness greater than ever, 2 Cor. 7.1. and yet corrupt nature will be still tempting men to corrupt and abuse it. The more luscious the food is, the more men are apt to surfeit upon it.

This perversion and abuse of free grace and Christian liberty, is justly chargeable (though upon different accounts) both upon wicked and good men. Wicked men corrupt it designedly, that by entitling God to their sins, they might sin the more quietly and securely. So the devil instigated the Heathens to sin against the light and law of nature, by representing their gods to them as drunken and lascivious deities. So the Nicolaitans, and the school of Simon, and after them the Gnostics, and other Heretics in the very dawning of gospel-light and liberty, began presently to loose the bond of restraint from their lusts, under pretence of grace and liberty. The Etiani[1] blushed not to teach. That sin, and perseverance {553} *in sin, could hurt the salvation of none, so that they would embrace their principles*.

How vile and abominable inferences the Manichæans, Valentinians and Cerdonites drew from the grace and liberty of the gospel, in the following ages, I had rather mourn over than recite; and if we come down to the *fifteenth century*, we shall find the Libertines of those days as deeply drenched in this sin, as most that went before them. Calvin[2] mournfully observes, That under pretence of Christian liberty, they trampled all godliness under foot; the vile courses their loose opinions soon carried them into, plainly discovered for what intents and purposes they were projected and calculated: and he that reads the preface to that grave and learned Mr. Thomas Gataker's book, intitled, *God's eye upon Israel*, will find, That some Antinomians of our days are not much behind the worst and vilest of them. One of them cries out, *Away with the law, away with the law, it cuts off a man's legs, and then bids him walk*. Another saith, *It is as possible for Christ himself to sin, as for a child of God to sin. That if a man, by the Spirit, know himself to be in a state of grace, though he be drunk or commit murder, God sees no sin in him*. With much more of the same bran, which I will not transcribe.

But others there are, whose judgments are unhappily tainted and leavened with those loose doctrines; yet being in the main godly persons, they dare not take liberty to sin, or live in the neglect of known duties, though their principles too much incline that way; but though they dare not, others will, who imbibe corrupt notions from them; and the renowned piety of the authors will be no antidote against the danger, but

make the poison operate the more powerfully, by receiving it in such a vehicle. Now it is highly probable, such men as these might be charmed into such dangerous opinions, upon such accounts as these:

1. It is like some of them might have felt in themselves the anguish of a perplexed conscience under sin, and not being able to live with these terrors of the law, and dismal fears of conscience, might too hastily snatch at those doctrines which promise them relief and ease, as I noted before in the fifth *Cause* of my *Treatise of Errors*. And that this is not a guess at random, will appear from the very title page of Mr. Saltmarsh's book of free-grace, where (as an inducement to the reader to swallow his Antinomian doctrine) he shews him this curious bait.

It is (saith he) *an experiment of Jesus Christ upon one who hath been in the bondage of a troubled conscience, at times, for the space* {554} *of about twelve years till now upon a clearer discovery of Jesus Christ in the gospel, &c.*

2. Others have been induced to espouse these opinions from the excess of their zeal against the errors of the Papists, who have notoriously corrupted the doctrine of justification by free grace; decried *imputed*, and exalted inherent righteousness above it. The Papists have designedly and industriously sealed up the scriptures from the people, lest they should there discover those sovereign and effectual remedies, which God hath provided for their distressed consciences, in the riches of his own grace, and the meritorious death of Christ; and so all their *masses, pilgrimages, auricular confessions*, with all their dear *indulgencies*, should lie upon their hands as stale and cheap commodities. *Oh*, (said Stephen Gardiner) *let not this gap of free grace be opened to the people.*

But as soon as the light of reformation had discovered the free grace of God to sinners, (which is indeed the only effectual remedy of distressed consciences) and by the same light the horrid cheats of the man of sin were discovered; all good men, who were enlightened by the reformation, justly and deeply abhorred Popery, as the enemy of the grace of God and true peace of conscience, and fixed themselves upon the sound and comfortable doctrines of justification by faith through the alone righteousness of Christ. Meanwhile, thankfully acknowledging, that they

who believe, ought also to maintain good works. But others there were, transported by an indiscreet zeal, who have almost bended the grace of God as far too much the other way, and have both spoken and written many things very unbecoming the grace of God, and tending to looseness and neglect of duty.

3. It is manifest, that others of them have been ingulphed and sucked into those dangerous quicksands of Antinomian errors, by separating the Spirit from the written word. If once a man pretend the Spirit without the scriptures to be his rule, whither will not his own deluding fancies carry him, under a vain and sinful pretence of the Spirit?

In the year 1528, when Helsar, Traier, and Seekler, were confuted by Hallerus; and their errors about oaths, magistrates and pædo-baptism, were detected by him and by Colveus at Bern, that which they had to say for themselves was, That *the Spirit taught them otherwise than the letter of the Scriptures speak*. So dangerous it is to separate what God hath conjoined, and father our own fancies upon the Holy Spirit.

4. And it is not unlike, but a comparative weakness, and injudiciousness of mind, meeting with a fervent zeal for Christ and his glory, may induce others to espouse such taking, and plausible, though pernicious doctrines; they are not aware of the dangerous {555} consequents of the opinions they embrace, and what looseness may be occasioned by them: I speak not of occasions taken, but given, by such opinions and expressions; a good man will draw excellent inferences of duty from the very same doctrine. Instance that of the shortness of time, from whence the apostle infers abstinence, strictness, and diligence, 1 Cor. 7.29, but the Epicure infers all manner of dissolute and licentious practices, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die," 1 Cor. 15.22. The best doctrines arc this way liable to abuse.

But let all good men beware of such opinions and expressions, as give an handle to wicked men to abuse the grace of God, which haply the author himself dare not do, and may strongly hope others may not do: but if the principle will yield it, it is in vain to think corrupt nature will not catch at it, and make a vile use and dangerous improvement of it.

For example, If such a principle as this be asserted for a truth before the world, *That men need not fear that any, or all the sins they commit, shall do them any hurt;*[3] let the author, or any man in the world, warn and caution readers (as the Antinomian author of that expression hath done) not to abuse this doctrine, it is to no purpose: the doctrine itself is full of dangerous consequents, and wicked men have the best skill to infer and draw them forth, to cherish and countenance their lusts; that which the author might design for the relief of the distressed, quickly turns itself into poison, in the bowels of the wicked; nor can we excuse it, by saying any gospel-truth may be thus abused; for this is none of that number, but a principle that gives offence to the godly, and encouragement to the ungodly. And so much as to the rise and occasion of Antinomian errors.

The Doctrinal Errors of Antinomianism

2. In the next place, let us view some of the chief doctrines commonly called Antinomian, amongst which there will be found a Πρωτον ψευδος, the radical and most prolific error, from which most of the rest are spawned and procreated.

Error 1. I shall begin with the dangerous mistake of the Antinomians in the doctrine of *justification*. The article of justification is deservedly stiled by our Divines, *Articulus stantis, vel cadentis religionis*, the very pillar of the Christian religion.

In two things, however, I must do the Antinomians right: (1.) In acknowledging, that though their errors about justification be great and dangerous, yet they are not so much about the substance as about the mode of a sinner's justification; an error far inferior to that of the Papists, who depress the righteousness of Christ, and exalt their own inherent righteousness in the business of justification. (2.) I am bound in charity to believe, that some among them do hold those errors but speculatively, whilst the truth lies nearer {556} their hearts, and will not suffer them to reduce their own opinions into practice. Now as to their errors about justification, the most that I have read do make *Justification to be an immanent and eternal act of God; and do affirm, the elect were justified before themselves or the world had a being*.[4] Others come lower, and

affirm, *The elect were justified at the time of Christ's death*. With these Dr. Crisp harmonizes.

Error 2. That justification by faith is no more but a manifestation to us of what was really done before we had a being. Hence Mr. Saltmarsh thus defines faith, *It is*, saith he, *a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us;* so that when we believe, that which was hid before doth then appear. *God* (saith another) cannot charge one sin upon that man who believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ.

Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question, Whether we believe, or no: Nay, That we ought no more to question our faith than to question Christ. *Saltmarsh of Free Grace*, p. 92, 95.

Error 4. That believers are not bound to confess sin, mourn for it, or pray for the forgiveness of it; because it was pardoned before it was committed; and pardoned sin is no sin. See Eaton's *Honeycomb*, p. 446, 447.

Error 5. They say. That God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit. Some of them, as Mr. Town and Mr. Eaton speak out and tell us, That God can see no adultery, no lying, no blasphemy, no cozening in believers; for though believers do fall into such enormities, yet all their sins being pardoned from eternity, they are no sins in them. Town's *Assertions*, p. 96, 97, 98. Eaton's *Honeycomb*, chap. 7. p. 136, 137. with others of a more pernicious character than these.

Error 6. That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God. This is avouched generally in all their writings.

Error 7. They tell us. That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ. *Vide Dr. Crisp*, p. 270.

Error 8. Upon the same ground it is that they affirm, That believers need not fear either their own sins, or the sins of others; for that neither their own, nor any other men's sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do

any duty for their own salvation.

Error 9. They will not allow the new covenant to be made properly with us, but with Christ for us; and that this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition on our part. They do not absolutely deny that faith, repentance, and obedience are conditions {557} in the new covenant; but say, They are not conditions on our part, but Christ's; and that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us. *Saltmarsh of Free Grace*, p. 126, 127.

Error 10. They speak very slightingly of trying ourselves by marks and signs of grace. Saltmarsh often calls it a weak, low, carnal way; but the New-England Antinomians, or Libertines, call it a fundamental error, to make sanctification an evidence of justification: that it is to light a candle to the sun; that it darkens our justification; and that the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is. *See their book entitled, Rise, Reign*. Error 72.

In this breviate, or summary account of Antinomian doctrines, I have only singled out, and touched some of their principal mistakes and errors into which some of them run much farther than others. But I look upon such doctrines to be in themselves of a very dangerous nature, and the malignity and contagion would certainly spread much farther into the world than it doth, had not God provided two powerful antidotes to resist the malignity, viz.

1. The scope and current of scripture.

2. The experience and practice of the saints.

(1.) These doctrines run cross to the scope and current of the scriptures, which constantly speak of all unregenerate persons (without exception of the very elect themselves, during that state) as children of wrath, even as others, without Christ, and under condemnation. [Eph. 2.3,12, Rom. 5.18.]

They [the Scriptures] frequently discover God's anger, and tell us his castigatory rods of affliction are laid upon them for their sins.

They represent sin as the greatest evil; most opposite to the glory of God and good of the saints; and are therefore filled with cautions and threatenings to prevent their sinning.

They call the saints frequently and earnestly, not only to mourn for their sins before the Lord; but to pray for the pardon and remission of them in the blood of Christ.

They give us a far different account of saving faith, and do not place it in a persuasion more or less of Christ's love to us, or a manifestation in our consciences of the actual remission of our sins before we had a being; but in receiving Christ as the gospel offers him for righteousness and life.

They frequently call the people of God to the examination and trial of their interest in Christ by marks and signs: and accordingly furnish them with variety of such marks from the divers parts or branches of sanctification in themselves.

They earnestly and every where press believers to strictness and {558} constancy in the duties of religion, as the way wherein God would have them to walk. They infer duties from privileges; and therefore the Antinomian dialect is a wild note which the generality of serious Christians do easily distinguish from the scripture-stile and language.

(2.) The experience and practice of the saints recorded in scripture, as well as our contemporaries, or those whose lives are recorded for our imitation, do greatly secure us from the spreading malignity of Antinomianism. Converse with the living, or read the histories of dead saints, and you shall find, that in their addresses to God they still bless and praise him, for that great and wonderful change of state which was made upon them when they first believed in Christ, and on their believing passed from death to life; freely acknowledged before God, they were before their conversion equal in sin and misery with the vilest wretches in the world: they heartily mourn for their daily sins, fear nothing more than sin, no afflictions in the world go so near their hearts as sin doth: they can mourn for the hardness of their hearts, that they can mourn no more for sin. They acknowledge the rods of God that are upon them, are not only the evidences of his displeasure against them for their sins, but the fruits

of their uneven walking with him; and that the greatest of their afflictions is less than the least of their iniquities deserve. They fall at their Father's feet as oft as they fall into sin, humbly and earnestly suing for pardon through the blood of Christ. They are not only sensible that God sees sin in them, but that he seeth such and so great evils in them, as makes them admire at his patience, that they are not consumed in their iniquities. They find cause enough to suspect their own sincerity, doubt the truth of their faith, and of their graces; and are therefore frequent and serious in the trial and examination of their own states by scripture marks and signs. [2 Peter 1.2-12.] They urge the commands and threatenings, as well as the promises, upon their own hearts to promote sanctification; excite themselves to duty and watchfulness against sin; they also encourage themselves by the rewards of obedience, knowing their labour is not in vain in the Lord [1 Cor. 15.58]: and all this while they look not for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; nor for that in the law, which is only to be found in the gospel; nor for that on earth which is only to be found in heaven: this is the way that they take. And he that shall tell them their sins can do them no hurt, or their duties do them no good, speaks to them not only as a Barbarian, in a language they understand not, but in such a language as their souls detest and abhor.

Moreover, the zeal and love of Christ and his glory being kindled in their souls, they have no patience to hear such doctrines as so greatly derogate from his glory, under a pretence of honouring {559} and exalting him: it wounds and grieves their very hearts to see the world hardened in their prejudices against reformation, and a gap opened to all licentiousness.

But, notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much obtaining in the professing world. For my own part, he that searches my heart and reins, is witness, I would rather chuse to have my right hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than to speak one word, or write one line to cloud and diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it than I do; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretence of exalting it, do really militate against it. To begin therefore with the first and leading error.

Error 1: Justification from Eternity

Error I. *That the justification of sinners is an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself;* αναμαρτητοι, as some of them have spoken. To stop the progress of this error I shall,

1. Lay down the sentence of the orthodox about it.

2. Offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

(1.) That which I take to be the truth agreed upon, and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching gospel-justification, is by them made clear to the world, in these following scriptural distinctions of it.

Justification may be considered under a twofold respect or habitude.

1. According to God's eternal decree; or,

2. According to the execution thereof in time.

1. According to God's eternal decree and purpose; and in this respect grace is said to be "given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. 1.19. and we are said to be "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Eph. 1.5.

2. According to the execution thereof in time, so they again distinguish it by considering it two ways:

1. In its impetration by Christ.

2. In its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them by the death of Christ, Rom. 5.9,10. where we are said to be "justified by his blood;" and he is said to have

"made peace through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things to himself," Col. 1.20. to be "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," {560} Rom. 4.25. Once more, "That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses," 2 Cor. 5.19. God the Father had in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them. Again,

2. It must be considered in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling. When an elect sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passeth from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favour; this is our actual justification, Rom. 5.1. Acts 13.39. John 5.24. which actual justification is again considered two ways:

1. Universally and in general, as to the state of the person.

2. Specifically and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God, and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ against sins to come: and though these special and particular sins we afterward fall into, do need particular pardons; yet, by the renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again, they carefully distinguish betwixt,

1. Its application by God to our persons. And,

2. Its declaration, or manifestation in us, and to us.

Which manifestation, or declaration, is either,

1. Private, in the conscience of a believer, or,

2. Public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is many ways distinguished. And, notwithstanding all this, it is still *actus indivisus*, an undivided act, not on our part, for it is iterated in many acts; but on God's part, who at once decreed it; and on Christ's part, who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation, universally applied it, as to the state of the person justified; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation.

In this sentence or judgment the generality of reformed, orthodox divines are agreed; and the want of distinguishing (as they, according to scripture, have distinguished) hath led the Antinomians into this first error about justification, and that error hath led them into the most of the other errors. That this doctrine of theirs (which teaches that men are justified actually and completely, before they have a being) is an error, and hath no solid foundation to support it, may be evidenced by these three reasons. {561}

1. Because it is irrational.

2. Because it is unscriptural.

3. Because it is injurious to Christ and the souls of men.

Reason 1. It is irrational to imagine, that men are actually justified before they have a being, by an immanent act or decree of God. Many things have been urged upon this account, to confute and destroy this fancy, and much more may be rationally urged against it: let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reason.

1. Can we rationally suppose, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reason tells us, *Non entis nulla sunt accidentia;* that which is not, can neither be condemned nor justified: but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own person be a subject of justification. Where there is no law, there is no sin; where there is no sin, there is no punishment; where there is neither sin nor punishment, there can be no

guilt; (for guilt is an obligation to punishment) and where there is neither law nor sin, nor obligation to punishment, there can be no justification. He that is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a discharge. What remains then, but that either the elect must exist from eternity, or be justified in time? It is true, future beings may be considered as in the purpose and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Christ, who died intentionally for the sins of the elect, and rose again for their justification; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Christ takes place upon any man for his actual justification, until he personally exist: for the object of justification, is a sinner actually ungodly, Rom. 4.5. but so no man is, or can be so from eternity. In election, men are considered without respect to good or evil done by them, Rom. 9.11. not so in actual justification.

2. In justification there is a change made upon the state of the person, Rom. 5.8,9. 1 Cor. 6.9,10,11. By justification men pass from a state of death to a state of life, John 5.24. but the decree or purpose of God, in itself, makes no such actual change upon the state of any person: it hath indeed the nature of an universal cause; but an universal cause produceth nothing without particulars. If our state be changed, it is not by an immanent act of God: hence no such thing doth *transire*. A mere *velle non punire*, or intention to justify us in due time and order, makes no change on our state till that come, and the particular causes have wrought. A prince may have a purpose or intention to pardon a law-condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but whilst the law that condemned him, stands in its full force and power against him, he is not justified or acquitted, {562} notwithstanding that gracious intention, but stand still condemned. So it is with us, till by faith we are implanted into Christ. It is true Christ is a surety for all his, and hath satisfied the debt; he is a common head to all his, as Adam was to all his children, Rom. 5.19. but as the sin of Adam condemns none but those that are in him; so the righteousness of Christ actually justifies none but those that are in him; and none are actually in him but believers: therefore, till we believe, no actual change passeth, or can pass upon our states. So that this hypothesis is contrary to reason.

Reason 2. As this opinion is irrational, so it is unscriptural. For

1. The scripture frequently speaks of remission or justification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity, Rom. 4.23,24. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him," &c. And, Gal. 3.8, "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham." The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; but if they were justified from eternity, how was the gospel preached before their justification?

2. The scripture leaves all unbelievers, without distinction, under condemnation and wrath. The curse of the law lies upon them all till they believe, John 3.18. " He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." And, Eph. 2.3,12,13. The very elect themselves *were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*. They were at that time, or during that state of nature, (which takes in all that whole space betwixt their conception and conversion) *without Christ, without hope, without God in the world*. But if this opinion be true, that the elect were justified from eternity, or from the time of Christ's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Christ, without hope, without God in the world; except these two may consist together, (which is absolutely impossible) that the children of wrath, without God, Christ, or hope, are actually discharged from their sins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of justification.

Objection. But doth not scripture say, Rom. 8.33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If none can charge the elect, then God hath discharged them.

Solution. God hath not actually discharged them, as they are elect, but as they are justified elect; for so runs the text, and clears itself in the very next words, *It is God that justifieth*. When God hath actually justified an elect person, none can charge him.

3. It is cross to the scripture order of justification, which {563} places it not only after Christ's death in the place last cited, Rom. 8.33, but also after our actual vocation; as is plain, ver. 30, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is absurd to

place vocation before predestination, or glorification before justification; Sure then it must be absurd also to place justification before vocation; the one as well as the other confounds and breaks the scripture order: You may as well say, men shall be glorified that were never justified, as say they may be justified before they believed, or existed. So that you see the notion of justification from eternity, or before our actual existence, and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to sacred scripture, as it is to sound reason.

Reason 3. And as it is found repugnant to reason and scripture, so it is highly injurious to Jesus Christ and the souls of men.

(1.) It greatly injures the Lord Jesus Christ, and robs him of the glory of being our Saviour; for if the elect be justified from eternity, Christ cannot be the Saviour of the elect, as most assuredly he is; for if Christ save them, he must save them as persons subject to perishing, either *de facto* or *de jure*. But if the elect were justified from eternity, they could, in neither respect, be subject to perishing: For he that was eternally justified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he that never was, nor could be condemned, could never be subject to perishing; and he that never was, nor could be subject to perishing, can never truly and properly be said to be saved.

If it be said the elect were not justified till the death of Christ, I demand then what became of all them that died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from Rom. 8.30, that the whole number of the glorified in heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth: Let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretence of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Saviour of his elect.

(2.) It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture every where makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ, Rom. 3.24,25. Rom. 8.3,4. 2 Cor. 5.19,20. Gal. 3.13,14. Eph. 1.17. but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross? as it plainly appears from these scriptures to be. Nay,

(3.) This opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the blood of Christ for our sins. He did not die according to this opinion to pay our debts. And here Antinomianism and Socinianism {564} meet, and congratulate each other: For if there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay them; and it is manifest there were no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his elect, if the elect were from eternity justified; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid: For all justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

If there were any debt for Christ to pay by his blood, they must either be his own debts, or the elect's. To say they were his own is a blasphemous reproach to him; and, according to this opinion, we cannot say they were the elect's; for if they were justified from eternity their debts were discharged, and their bonds cancelled from eternity. So that this opinion leaves nothing to the blood of Christ to discharge, or make satisfaction for.

(4.) And as it hath been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, so it is greatly injurious to the souls of men, as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which naturally flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear in

Error 2: Faith a Believing we are Justified

Error II. *That justification by faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really and actually done before; or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us; and that when persons do believe, that which was hid before doth then only appear to them.*

Refutation. As the former error dangerously corrupts the doctrine of justification, so this corrupts the doctrine of faith; and therefore deserves to be exploded by all Christians.

That there is a manifestation and discovery of the special love of God and our own saving concernment in the death of Christ to some Christians at

some times cannot be denied. Paul could say, Gal. 2.20,21, Christ loved him, and gave himself for him; but to say that this is the justifying act of faith, whereby a sinner passes from condemnation and death into the state of righteousness and life; this I must look upon as a great error; and that for the following reasons:

Reason 1. Because there be multitudes of believing and justified persons in the world, who have no such manifestation, evidence, or assurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Christ, and that he died to put away their sins [in particular]; but daily conflict with strong fears and doubts, whether it be so or no, [as to themselves]. There are but few among believers that attain such a persuasion and manifestation, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in scripture by justification through faith. Many thousand new-born Christians live as the new-born babe, which neither knows its own estate, or the inheritance to which it is born. {565}

Vivet, et vitæ nescius ipse suæ.

"Not conscious of life, it lives."

A soul may be in Christ, and a justified state, without any such persuasion or manifestation, as they here speak of, Isa. 50.10. and if any shall assert the contrary, he will condemn the greatest part of the generation of God's children. Now that cannot be the saving and justifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified persons.

But manifestation, or a personal persuasion of the love of God to a man's soul, or that Christ died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in multitudes of believing and justified souls.

Therefore such a persuasion or manifestation is not that saving justifying faith which the scripture speaks of.

That faith which only justifies the person of a sinner before God must necessarily be found in all justified believers, or else a man may be justified without the least degree of justifying faith, and consequently it is not faith alone by which a man is justified before God.

Reason 2. That cannot be a justifying act of faith which is not constant and abiding with the justified person, but comes and goes, is frequently lost and recovered, the state of the person still remaining the same. And such contingent things are these persuasions and manifestations; they come and go, are won and lost, the state of the person still remaining the same. Job was as much a justified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." [Job 19.25.] The same may be said of David, Heman, Asaph, and the greatest number of justified believers recorded in the scripture. There be two things belonging to a justified state, (1.) That which is essential and inseparable, to wit, faith uniting the soul to Christ. (2.) That which is contingent and separable, to wit, evidence and persuasion of our interest in him. Those believers that walk in darkness and have no light have yet a real, special interest in God as their God, Isa. 50.10. Here then you find believers without persuasion or manifestation of God's love to them; which could never be, if justifying faith consisted in a personal persuasion, manifestation, or evidence of the love of God, and pardon of sin to a man's soul. That cannot be the justifying faith spoken of in scripture, without which a justified person may live in Christ and be as much in a state of pardon, and acceptation with God, when he wants it, as when he hath it. But such is persuasion, evidence, or manifestation of a man's particular interest in the love of God, or the {566} pardon of his sins. Therefore this is not the justifying faith the scripture speaks of.

Reason 3. That only is justifying, saving faith, which gives the soul right and title to Christ, and the saving benefits which come by Christ upon all the children of God. Now, it is not persuasion that Christ is ours, but acceptation of him that gives us interest in Christ, and the saving benefits and privileges of the children of God. John 1.12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." So that unless the Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Christ, and personal persuasion of pardon be one and the same thing, and consequently, that all believers in the world are persuaded, or assured, that their sins are pardoned; and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deserted, dark and doubting Christians; this persuasion they speak of is not, nor can it be the act of faith, which justifies the person of a sinner before God. That which I think led our

Antinomians into this error, was an unsound and unwary definition of faith, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechisms, and other systems, passing without contradiction or scruple in those days; which, though it were a mistake, and hath abundantly been proved to be so in latter days, yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion so serviceable to the support of the darling opinion of eternal justification.

Reason 4. A man may be strongly persuaded of the love of God to his soul, and of the pardon of his sins, and yet have no interest in Christ, nor be in a pardoned state. This was the case of the Pharisees and others, Luke 18.9, Rev. 3.17, therefore this persuasion cannot be justifying faith. If a persuasion be that which justifies the persuaded person, then the Pharisees and Laodiceans were justified. Oh! how common and easy is it for the worst of men to be strongly persuaded of their good condition, whilst humble, serious Christians doubt and stagger? I know not what such doctrine as this is useful for, but to beget and strengthen that sin of presumption, which sends down multitudes to hell out of the professing world: For what is more common amongst the most carnal and unsanctified part of the world, not only such as are merely moral, but even the most flagitious and profane, than to support themselves by false persuasions of their good estate? When they are asked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of salvation they have, and how they are founded? their common answer is, Christ died for sinners, and that they are persuaded, that whatever he hath done for any other, he hath done it for them as well as others: but such a [groundless] persuasion cometh not of him that called them, and is of dangerous consequence. {567}

Reason 5. This doctrine is certainly unsound, because it confounds the distinction betwixt dogmatical and saving faith; and makes it all one, to believe an axiom or proposition, and to believe savingly in Christ to eternal life. What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Christ, more than the mere assent of the understanding to a scripture axiom, or proposition, without any consent of the will, to receive Jesus Christ as the gospel offers him? And this is no more than what any unregenerate person may do; yea, the very devils themselves assent to the truth of scripture axioms or propositions as well as men, James 2.19. "Thou believest there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and

tremble." What is more than a scripture axiom or proposition? "God laid the iniquities of us all upon Christ," Isa. 53.6. And yet (saith Dr. Crisp, p. 296.) "God cannot charge one sin upon that man that believes this truth, *That God laid his iniquities upon Christ*." The assent of the understanding may be often given to a scripture-proposition, whilst the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly averse to Jesus Christ. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Christ, and persuade myself presumptively, that mine, as well as other men's were laid upon him; and yet remain a perfect stranger to all saving union and communion with him.

Reason 6. This opinion cannot be true, because it takes away the only support that bears up the soul of a believer in times of temptation and desertion.

For how will you comfort such a distressed soul that saith, and saith truly, I have no persuasion that Christ is mine, or that my sins are pardoned; but I am heartily willing to cast my poor sin-burdened soul upon him, that he may be mine; I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet to cleave to him, wait at the door of hope; I stay and trust upon him, though I walk in darkness and have no light. Now let such doctrines as this be preached to a soul in this condition (and we may be sure it is the condition of many thousands belonging to Christ) I say, bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unless they be persuaded of the love of God, and that God laid their iniquities on Christ, except they have some manifestation that their persons were justified from eternity, their accepting of Christ, consent of their wills, waiting at his feet, &c. signifies nothing; if they believe not that their particular sins were laid upon Christ, and are pardoned to them by him, they are still unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. Whatever pretences of spiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you see by this it really deprives a very great, if not the greatest number of God's people of their best and sweetest relief in days of darkness and spiritual {568} distress. So that this doctrine which makes manifestation and assurance the very essence of justifying faith, appears hereby to be both a false and very dangerous doctrine. And yet there is as much or more danger to the souls of men in their

Error 3: Blind Believing we have Believed.

Error 3. *That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question whether they believe or no. Nay, that they ought no more to question their faith than to question Christ.*

Refutation. What an easy way to heaven is the Antinomian way? Were it but as true and safe to the soul, as it is easy and pleasing to the flesh, who would not embrace it? What a charm of the devil is prepared in those two propositions? Be but persuaded more or less of Christ's love to thy soul (saith Mr. Saltmarsh) and that is justifying faith. Here is a snare of the devil laid for the souls of men. And then (2.) To make it fast and sure upon the soul, and effectually to prevent the discovery of their error, tell them they need no more to doubt or question their faith than to question Christ, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error, and a very dangerous one, will appear by the following reasons:

Reason 1. The questioning and examining of our faith is a commanded scripture-duty, 2 Cor. 13.5, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownselves," &c. And 2 Pet. 1.10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10.12. *The second epistle of* John, ver. 8, "Look to yourselves that we lose not the things which we have wrought:" With a multitude of other scriptures, recommending holy jealousy, serious self-trial and examination of our faith, as the unquestionable duties of the people of God. But if we ought to question our faith no more than we ought to question Christ, away then with all self-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election sure; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there is no place or room for examination, or further endeavours to make it surer than it is. How do you like this doctrine, Christians? How many be there among you, that find no more cause to question your own faith or interest in Christ, than you do to question, whether there be a Christ, or whether he shed his blood for the remission of any man's sins?

Reason 2. This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous because it leaves no way to recover a presumptuous sinner out of his dangerous mistakes; but confirms and fixes him in them to the great hazard of his eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information, and nails them fast to the carnal state in which they are. According to this doctrine, it is impossible for a man to think himself something, when he is nothing; {569} or to be guilty of such a paralogism and cheat put by himself upon his own soul, James 2.22. this, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong; he is sure enough of heaven if he be but strongly persuaded that Christ died for him, and he shall come thither at last. Certainly this was not the counsel Christ gave to the self-deceived Laodiceans, Rev. 3.17,18, but instead of dissuading them from self-jealousy and suspicion of their condition, whether their faith and state were safe or not, he rather counsels them to buy eye-salve, that is, to labour after better information of the true state and condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.

Reason 3. This doctrine cannot be true, because it supposes every persuasion, or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain, as the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that Jesus Christ died for sinners. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," 1 Tim. 1.15. This is a foundation-stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself, Isa. 28.16, and shall the strong conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare in point of certainty with it? As well may probable, and merely conjectural propositions, compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments that leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that the heart is deceitful above all things, the most notorious cheat and imposter in the world, Jer. 17.9. Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into hell by a remediless self-deception.

Error 4: No Need to Pray for Pardon for Sin

Error 4. The fourth Antinomian error before-mentioned, was this, *That believers are not bound to confess their sins, or pray for the pardon of them; because their sins were pardoned before they were committed; and pardoned sin is no sin.*

Refutation. If this be true doctrine, then it will justify and make good such conclusions and inferences as these, which necessarily flow from it: viz.

1. That there is no sin in believers.

2. Or if there be, the evil is very inconsiderable. Or,

3. Whatever evil is in it, it is not the will of God that they should either confess it, mourn over it, or pray for the remission of it; whatever he requires of others, yet they need {570} take no notice of it, so as to afflict their hearts for it; God hath exempted them from such concernments: There is nothing but joy to a believer, saith Mr. Eaton. But neither of these conclusions are either true or tolerable; therefore neither is the principle so which yieldeth them.

(1.) It is not true or tolerable to affirm, that there is no sin in a believer: 1 John 1.18, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not," Eccl. 7.20. "In many things we offend all," James 3.2. The scriptures plainly affirm it, and the universal experience of all the saints sadly confirms it. It is true, the blood of Christ hath taken away the guilt of sin, so that it shall not condemn believers; and the spirit of sanctification hath taken away the dominion of sin, so that it doth not reign over believers; but nothing, except glorification, utterly destroys the existence of sin in believers. The acts of sin are our acts, and not Christ's; and the stain and pollution of those sinful acts, are the burthens and infelicities of believers, even in their justified state. Dr. Crisp indeed, in p. 270, 271. calls that objection (I suppose he means distinction betwixt the guilt of sin, and sin itself) a simple objection, and tells us, the very sin

itself, as well as the guilt of it, *passed off from us, and was laid upon Christ: So that speaking of the sins of blasphemy, murder, theft, adultery, lying*, &c. *from that time* (saith he) *that they were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a transgressor. If thou hast a part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually the transgressions of Christ. So that now thou art not an idolater, or persecutor, a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, thou art not a sinful person; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God*, &c. Such expressions justly offend and grieve the hearts of Christians, and expose Christianity to scorn and contempt. Was it not enough that the guilt of our sin was laid on him, but we must imagine also, that the thing itself, sin, with all its deformity and pollution should be essentially transferred from us to Christ? No, no. After we are justified, sin dwelleth in us, Rom. 7.17, warreth in us, and brings us into captivity, verse 23, burthens and oppresses our very souls, verse 24. Methinks I need not stand to prove what I should think no sound experienced Christian dares to deny, that there is much sin still remaining in the persons of the justified. He that dares to deny it, hath little acquaintance with the nature of sin, and of his own heart.

(2.) It is neither true nor tolerable to say, there is no considerable evil in the sins of believers, deserving a mournful confession or petition for pardon. The desert of sin is hell: it is an artifice of Satan to draw men to sin, by persuading them there is no great {571} evil in it; but none except fools will believe it. Fools, indeed, make a mock of sin; but all that understand either the intrinsic evil of it, or the sad and dismal effects produced by it, are far from thinking it a light or inconsiderable evil. The sins, even of believers, greatly wrong and offend their God, Psalm 51.4. and is that a light thing with us? They interrupt and clog our communion with God, Rom. 7.21. They grieve the good Spirit of God, Eph. 4.30. Certainly these arc no inconsiderable mischiefs.

(3.) Now if there be sin in believers, and so much evil in their sins (neither of which any sober Christian will deny) then undoubtedly it is their duty to confess it freely, mourn for it bitterly, and pray for the pardon of it earnestly; unless God have any where discharged them from those duties, and told them these are none of their concernments, and

that he expects not these things from justified persons; but that these are duties properly and only belonging to other men. But on the contrary, you find the whole current of scripture running strongly and constantly in direct opposition to such idle and sinful notions. For,

(1.) He hath plainly declared it to be his will, that his people should confess their sins before him, and strongly connected their confessions with their pardons, 1 John 1.9. and frequently suspends from them the comfortable sense of forgiveness, till their hearts be brought to this duty, Psalm 32.5. compared with verses 3,4. the more to engage them to this duty, by the sensible ease and comfort attending and following it.

(2.) He also enjoins it upon them, That they mourn for their sins, Isa. 22.12. expresses his great delight in contrition and brokenness of spirit for sin, Isa. 66.2, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit." Christ himself pronounces a blessing upon them that mourn, Matt. 5.4. Justified Paul mournfully confesses his former blasphemies, persecutions, and injuries done against Christ, 1 Tim. 1.13. So did Ezra, Daniel, and other eximious saints.

Objection. Yes, say some, they did indeed confess their sins committed before their justification, but not their after-sins.

Reply. According to Antinomian principles, I would demand, If all the elect were justified from eternity, what sins any of them could confess which they had committed before their justification? Or, if they were justified from the time of Christ's death, what were the sins any of us have to confess who had not a being, and therefore had not actually sinned long after the death of Christ? But I hope none will deny, that the mournful complaints the apostle makes for sin, Rom. 7.23,24. were after he was a sanctified and justified person.

(3.) It is not the will of Christ to exempt any justified person upon {572} earth from the duty of praying frequently and fervently for the remission of his sins. This the most eminent saints upon earth have done. The greatest favourites of heaven have freely confessed, and heartily prayed for the remission of sin, Dan. 9.4 19. And that the gospel gives us no exemption from this duty, appears by Christ's injunction of it upon all his

people, Matt. 6.12.

Error 5: God sees no Sin in Believers

Error 5. To give countenance to the former error, they say, *That God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit;*

and seek a covert for this error from Numb. 23.21. and Jer. 50.20. In the former place it is said by Balaam, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor seen perverseness in Israel." And in the other place it is said, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve."

Refutation. Now that this opinion of the Antinomians is erroneous, will appear four ways.

1. By its repugnancy to God's omniscience.

2. By its inconsistency with his dispensations.

3. By its want of a scripture-foundation.

4. By its contradictoriness to their own principles.

It is true, and we thankfully acknowledge it, that God sees no sin in believers as a judge sees guilt in a malefactor, to condemn him for it; that is a sure and comfortable truth for us: but to say he sees no sin in his children, as a displeased father, to correct and chasten them for it, is an assertion repugnant to scripture, and very injurious to God. For,

(1.) It is injurious to God's *omniscience*, Psalm 139.2, "Thou" (saith holy David), "knowest my down-sitting, and my up-rising, and understandest my thoughts afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways." Job 28.24, "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heavens." Prov. 15.3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Psalm 33.14,15, "From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; he fashioneth their

hearts alike, he considereth all their works." He that denies that God seeth his most secret sins, therein, consequentially denies him to be God.

(2.) This assertion is inconsistent with God's providential dispensations to his people. When David, a justified believer, had sinned against him in the matter of Uriah, it is said, 2 Sam. 11.27, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord:" and, as the effect of that displeasure, it is said, chapter 12.15. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick." Among the Corinthians some that should not be {573} condemned with the world, were judged and chastened of the Lord for their undue approaches to his table, 1 Cor. 11.32. Now, I would ask the Antinomians these two questions. *Question* 1. Whether it can be denied, that David, under the Old Testament, and these Corinthians under the New, were justified persons; and yet the former stricken by God in his child, with its sickness and death; and the latter in like manner smitten by God in their own persons; and both for their respective sins committed against God; and yet God saw no sin in them? Did God smite them for sin, and yet behold no sin in them? Beware lest in ascribing such strokes to God, you strike at once both at his omniscience and justice. *Question* 2. How God, upon confession and repentance, can be said to put away his people's sins (as Nathan there assures David he had done) when in the mean time he saw no sin in him either to chastise him for, or to pardon in him? Do you think that God's afflictions, or pardons, are blindfold acts, done at random? How inconsistent is this with Divine dispensations.

(3.) This opinion is altogether destitute of a scripture-foundation; it is evident it hath none in the only places alleged for it. It hath no footing at all in Numb, 23.21. Grave and learned Gataker hath learnedly and industriously vindicated that scripture from this abuse of it by Antinomians, in his treatise upon that text, entitled, *God's eye upon his Israel;* where, after a learned and critical search of the text, he telleth us, it soundeth word for word thus from the original; "He hath not beheld wrong against Jacob, nor hath he seen grievance against Israel." So that the meaning is not, that God did not see sin in Israel, but that he beheld not with approbation the wrongs and injuries done by others against his Israel; and shews at large, by divers solid reasons, why the Antinomian

sense cannot be the proper sense of that place, it being cross to the main tenor of the story, and truth of God's word; which shews, that God often complained of their sins, often threatened to avenge them; yea, did actually avenge them by destroying them in the wilderness; nay, Balaam himself, who uttered these words unto Balak, did not so understand them, as appears by the advice he gave to Balak, to draw them into sin, that thereby God might be provoked to withdraw his protection from them.

And for Jer. 50.20, it makes nothing to their purpose. Many expound the sin there sought after, and not found, to be the sin of idolatry, which Israel should be purged from by their captivity, according to Isa. 27.9. But the generality of sound expositors are agreed, that by the not finding of Israel's and Judah's sin, is meant no more, but his not finding those bonds or obligations {574} against them to eternal punishment which their sins had put them under.

(4.) In a word, this opinion clashes with their other principles. For they say, that though there was pardon and remission under the old covenant (which they allowed to be a covenant of grace) yet it was but *gradatim*, and successively, as they offered sacrifices. If a man had sinned ignorantly, until he brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him, it may be a week, a month's distance between before they could have their pardon. *Vide* Dr. Crisp of the two covenants, p. 256, 257. Now I demand, If this were the state and case of all God's Israel under the Old Testament, why do these men affirm, that God can see no sin in a believer? and why do they expound the words of Balaam so contradictory to this their other opinion? For they will not deny but God sees unpardoned sins in all; and here is a week, or month, or more time allowed between the commission and remission of their sin. And so much of the fifth Antinomian error.

Error 6: No Fatherly Chastisements for Sin.

Error 6. *That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God, who hath received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ*.

There are several mistakes and errors in these assertions; and I suppose our Antinomians were led into them, (1.) By their abhorrence of the Popish doctrine, which errs more dangerously in the other extreme; for they wickedly assert our sufferings to be satisfactory for our sins, which is the ground of Popish penances, and voluntary self-castigations. (2.) From a groundless apprehension, that God's corrections of us for our sins are inconsistent with the fulness of Christ's satisfaction for them. Christ having paid all our debts, and dissolved our obligations to all punishment, it cannot consist with the justice of God to lay any rod upon us for our sins, after Christ hath borne all that our sins deserved.

This mistake of the end of Christ's death occasions them to stumble into the other mistakes; they imagine that Christ's satisfaction abolished God's hatred of sin in believers. But this cannot be; God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed be; for the hatred of sin is founded in the unchangeable nature of God: and he can as soon cease to be holy as cease to hate sin, Hab. 1.13. Nor was Christ's death ever designed to this end; though Christ hath satisfied for the sin of believers, God still hates sin in believers. His hatred to their sins, and love to their persons are not inconsistent. As a man may love his leg or arm, as they are members of his own body, and notwithstanding that love, hate the gangrene {575} which hath taken them; and lance or use painful corrosives for the cure of them.

Neither do our Antinomians distinguish as they ought, betwixt vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked; and his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father. Great and manifold are the differences betwixt his vindictive wrath upon his enemies, and the rebukes of the rod upon his children. Those are legal, these evangelical. Those out of wrath and hatred, these out of love. Those unsanctified, but these blessed and sanctified to happy ends and purposes to his people. Those for destruction, these for salvation.

To narrow the matter in controversy as much as we can, I shall lay down three concessions about God's corrections of his people.

Concession 1. We cheerfully and thankfully acknowledge the perfection and fulness of the satisfaction of Christ for all the sins of believers; and with thankfulness do own, that if God should cast all, or any of them into an ocean of temporal troubles and distresses; in all that sea of sorrow there would not be found one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ hath drunk the last drop of that cup, and left nothing for believers to suffer by way of satisfaction.

Concession 2. We grant also, that all the sufferings of believers in this world are not for their sins; but some of them are for the prevention of sin, 2 Cor. 12.7. some for the trial of their graces, Jam. 1.2,3. some for a confirming testimony to his truths, Acts 5.41. Such sufferings as these have much heavenly comfort concomitant with them.

Concession 3. We do not say that God's displeasure with his people for sin, evidenced against them in the sharpest rebukes of the rod, is any argument that God's love is turned into hatred against their persons: No, his love to his people is unchangeable. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, John 13.1. Yet notwithstanding all this, three things are undeniably clear, and being thoroughly apprehended, will end this controversy.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world on the persons of believers.

2. That this rod of God is sometimes laid on them for their sins.

3. That these fatherly corrections of them for their sins are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with his justice, completely satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins.

1. That God lays his correcting rod in this world upon the persons of believers. This no man has the face to deny that believes the scriptures to be the word of God, or that the troubles of good {576} men in this life fall not out by casualty, but by the counsel and direction of Divine Providence. He that denies the hand of God to be upon the persons of believers, in this life, in the way of painful chastisements and sufferings, must either ignorantly or wilfully overlook that scripture, Heb. 12.8.

"What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." Nor will any sober Christian deny these troubles of believers to be the effects of God's governing Providence in the world, or once imagine or affirm them to be mere casualties and contingencies; for "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground," Job 5.6. In what Eutopia doth that good man live upon earth, that feels not the painful rod of God upon himself, nor hears the sad laments and moans of other Christians under it! This sure is undeniable, that the rod of God is every where upon the persons and tabernacles of the righteous; and if any doubt it, his own sense and feeling may in a little time give him a painful demonstration of it.

2. And for the second, that this rod of God is sometimes laid upon believers for their sins, methinks no sober, modest Christian in the world should doubt or deny it, when he considers, that,

1. God himself hath so declared it.

2. The saints in all ages have freely confessed it to be so.

1. God himself hath fully and plainly declared it to be so, 2 Sam. 12.9-14, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house," &c. Here is the sword, a terrible and painful evil upon David's house, a man after God's own heart, and that expressly for his sin in the matter of Uriah. So Moses, one of the greatest favourites of heaven, for his sinful shifting of the Lord's work, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses," Exod. 4.13,14. "For the multitudes of thine iniquities, because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee," saith God to his own Israel, Jer. 30.15. To instance in all the declarations made by God himself in this case, were to transcribe a great part of both testaments.

2. And, as God hath declared the sins of his people to be the provoking causes of his rods upon them; so they have freely and ingenuously confessed and acknowledged the same, Lam. 3.39,40, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search

and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." This was spoken by Jeremiah in the name of the whole captive church; so Psalm 38.3,5, "There is no soundness in my flesh, (saith David) because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My {577} wounds stink, and are corrupt because of my foolishness." And were it not an hideous and unaccountable thing to hear a child of God, under his rod, to stand upon his own justification, and say, Lord, my sins have not deserved this at thy hand, nor is it justice in thee thus to chastise me after thou hast received satisfaction for all my sins from the hand of Christ? Would it not look like an horrid blasphemy to hear the best men in the world disputing and denying the justice of God in the troubles he lays him under? For my own part, let the Lord lay on as smartly as he will upon me, I desire to follow the holy patterns and precedents recorded in scripture for my imitation, and to say with the people of God, Ezra 9.13, "Thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve." And Micah 7.9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." And he that refuses so to do gives little evidence of the spirit of adoption in him, but a very clear proof of the pride and ignorance of his own heart. Job indeed stiffly stood upon his own vindication; but that was when he had to do with men who falsely charged him, laying those sins as the causes of his troubles, which he was innocent of, Job 22.5,6. But when he had to do with God, he disputes no more, but saith, *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth*, q.d. I have done, Father, I have done; whether these chastisements be for my sin or no, sure I am, my sin not only deserves all this, but hell itself; thou art holy, but I am vile.

3. Nor can it at all be doubted, but that these fatherly corrections of the saints for their sins, are reconcileable to, and fully consistent with his justice, satisfied by the blood of Christ for all their sins. For, (1.) If it were not so, the just and righteous God would never have inserted such a clause of reservation in his gracious covenant with his people, to chasten them as he saw need, after he had taken them into the covenant, Psalm 89.30-33, "If they transgress, I will visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless (saith he) my loving-kindness will I not take away." That [*nevertheless*] clearly proves the consistency of his stripes for sin, with his loving-kindness to his people,

and with Christ's satisfaction for their sins. (2.) If this were not consistent with the justice of God, to be sure he would never single them out to spend his rods upon, rather than others. It is most certain the holiest men have most lashes in this life; Asaph said, Psalm 73.12,14. "The ungodly prosper in the world, but he was chastened every morning;" and verse 5, "The wicked are not in trouble as other men." 1 Pet. 4.17. "Judgment must begin at the house of God;" and if piety would give men an exemption from all troubles, pains and chastisements, then men might discern love or hatred by the things that are {578} before them, contrary to Eccl. 9.1,2. Neither could those that are in Christ, suffer the painful agonies of death, because of sin, expressly contrary to Paul, Rom. 8.10, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." (3.) In a word, As Christ never shed his blood to extinguish or abolish God's displeasure against sin, in whomsoever it be found, so he never shed it to deprive his people of the manifold blessings and advantages that accrue to them by the rods of God upon them. It was never his intent to put us into a condition on earth, that would have been so much to our loss. So then if the hand of God be upon his people for sin, and consistently enough with his justice, it must be an error to say, God smites not believers for their sins, and it would be injustice in him so to do; which is their sixth error.

Error 7: Sin really transferred to Christ.

Error 7. They tell us, *That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ: That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid upon Christ, but simply the very faults that men commit, the transgression itself became the transgression of Christ; iniquity itself, not in any figure, but plainly sin itself was laid on Christ; and that Christ himself was no more righteous than this person is, and this person is not more sinful than Christ was.*

Refutation. These two propositions will never go down with sound and orthodox Christians: the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high. The one represents the pure and spotless Lord Jesus as sinful: the other represents the sinful creature as

pure and perfect: and both these propositions seem evidently to be built upon these two hypothesis. (1.) *That the righteousness of Christ is subjectively and inherently in us, in the same fulness and perfection as it is in Christ;* grant that, and then it will follow indeed, That Christ himself is not more righteous than the believer is. (2.) *That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid on Christ by way of imputation: but sin itself, the very transgression, or sinfulness itself, was transferred from the elect to Christ: and that by God's laying it on him, the sinfulness or fault itself was essentially transfused into him; and so sin itself did* transire a subjecto in subjectum. Grant but this, and it can never be denied but that Christ became as completely sinful as we.

But both these hypotheses are not only notoriously false, but utterly impossible, as will be manifested by and by; but before I come to the refutation of them, it will be necessary to lay down some concessions to clear the orthodox doctrine in this controversy, and narrow the matter under debate as much as may be.

(1.) And first. We thankfully acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the *Surety* of the New Testament, Heb. 7.22, and that as such, all the guilt and punishment of our sins were laid upon {579} him, Isa. 53.5,6. That is, God imputed, and he bare it in our room and stead. God the Father, as supreme Lawgiver and Judge of all, upon the transgression of the law, admitted the sponsion or suretiship of Christ, to answer for the sins of men, Heb. 10.5,6,7. And for this very end he was made under the law, Gal. 4.4,5. And that Christ voluntarily took it upon him to answer as our *Surety* whatsoever the law could lay to our charge; whence it became just and righteous that he should suffer.

(2.) We say, That God by laying upon, or imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, thereby our sins became legally his; as the debt is legally the surety's debt, though he never borrowed one farthing of it: Thus God laid, and Christ took our sins upon him, though in him was no sin, 2 Cor. 5.21, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," i.e. who was clean and altogether void of sin.

(3.) We thankfully acknowledge, that Christ hath so fully satisfied the law for the sins of all that are his, that the debts of believers are fully

discharged, and the very last mite paid by Christ. His payment is full, and so therefore is our discharge and acquittance, Rom. 8.1,31. And that, by virtue hereof, the guilt of believers is so perfectly abolished, that it shall never more bring him under condemnation, John 5.24. And so in Christ they are without fault before God.

3. We likewise grant, That as the guilt of our sins was by God's imputation laid upon Christ, so the righteousness of Christ is by God imputed to believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; and becomes thereby as truly and fully theirs, for the justification of their particular persons before God, as if they themselves had in their own persons fulfilled all that the law requires, or suffered all that is threatened; No inherent righteousness in our own persons, is, or can be more truly our own, for this end and purpose, than Christ's imputed righteousness is our own. He is *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. 23.6, *We are made the righteousness of God in him*, 1 Cor. 5.21. *Yea, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them that believe*, Rom. 8.4.

But notwithstanding all this, we cannot say, (1.) That Christ became as completely sinful as we. Or, (2.) That we are as completely righteous as Christ; And that over and above the guilt and punishment of sin, (which we grant was laid upon Christ) sin itself simply considered, or the very transgression itself, became the sin or transgression of Christ; and consequently that we are as completely righteous as Christ, and Christ as completely sinful as we are.

1. We dare not say, that sin simply considered, as the very transgression of the law itself, as well as the guilt and punishment, {580} became the very sin and transgression of Christ: For two things are distinctly to be considered and differenced, with respect to the law, and unto sin. As to the law, we are to consider it in,

1. Its preceptive part.

2. Its sanction.

(1.) The preceptive part of the law, which gives sin its formal nature, 1 John 3.4, *For sin is the transgression of the law*. All transgression arises

from the preceptive part of the law of God: he that transgresseth the precepts, sinneth: and under this consideration sin can never be communicated from one to another. The personal sin of one, cannot be in this respect, the personal sin of another. There is no physical transfusion of the transgression of the precept from one subject to another: this is utterly impossible; even Adam's personal sins, considered in his single private capacity, are not communicable to his posterity.

(2.) Besides the transgression of the preceptive part of the law, there is an obnoxiousness unto punishment, arising from the sanction of the law, which we call the guilt of sin; and this (as judicious Dr. Owen[5] observes) is separable from sin: and if it were not separable from the former, no sinner in the world could either be pardoned or saved; guilt may be made another's by imputation, and yet that other not rendered formally a sinner thereby: Upon this ground, we say the guilt and punishment of our sin, was that only which was imputed unto Christ, but the very transgression of the law itself, or sin formally and essentially considered, could never be communicated or transfused from us unto him. I know but two ways in the world by which one man's sins can be imagined to become another's, viz. Either by imputation, which is legal, and what we affirm; or by essential transfusion from subject to subject (as our adversaries fancy) which is utterly impossible; and we have as good ground to believe the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, as this wild notion of the essential transfusion of sin. Guilt arising from the sanction of the law may, and did pass from us to Christ by legal imputation; but sin itself, the very transgression itself, arising from the very preceptive part of the law, cannot so pass from us to Christ: For if we should once imagine, that the very acts and habits of sin, with the odious deformity thereof, should pass from our persons to Christ and subjectively to inhere in him, as they do in us; then it would follow,

First, That our salvation would thereby be rendered utterly impossible. For such an inhesion of sin in the person of Christ is absolutely inconsistent with the hypostatical union, which union is the very foundation of his satisfaction, and our salvation. Though {581} the Divine nature can, and doth dwell in union with the pure and sinless human nature of Christ, yet it cannot dwell in union with sin.

Secondly, This supposition would render the blood of the cross altogether unable to satisfy for us. He could not have been the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, if he had not been perfectly pure and spotless, 1 Pet. 1.19.

Thirdly, Had our sins thus been essentially transfused into Christ, the law had had a just and valid exception against him; for it accepts of nothing but what is absolutely pure and perfect. I admire, therefore, how any good men dare to call our doctrine, which teaches the imputation of our guilt and punishment to Christ, a simple doctrine; and assert, that the transgression itself became Christ's; and that thereby Christ became as completely sinful as we. And,

Fourthly, If the way of making our sins Christ's by imputation, be thus rejected and derided; and Christ asserted by some other way to become as completely sinful as we; then I cannot see which way to avoid it, but that the very same acts and habits of sin must inhere both in Christ and in believers also. For I suppose our adversaries will not deny, that notwithstanding God's laying the sins of believers upon Christ, there remain in all believers after their justification, sinful inclinations and aversations; a law of sin in their members, a body of sin and death. Did these things pass from them to Christ, and yet do they still inhere in them? Why do they complain and groan of indwelling sin? as Rom. 7, if sin itself be so transferred from them to Christ? Sure, unless men will dare to say, the same acts and habits of sin which they feel in themselves, are as truly in Christ as in themselves, they have no ground to say, that by God's laying their iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as they are; and if they should so affirm, that affirmation would undermine the very foundation of their own salvation.

I therefore heartily subscribe to that sound and holy sentence, of a clear and learned divine,[6] *Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing more sacredly and assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ did or suffered, nothing that he undertook, or underwent, did, or could constitute him subjectively, inherently, and thereupon personally a sinner, or guilty of any sin of his own. To bear the guilt or blame of other men's faults, to be* alienæ culpæ reus, *makes no man a sinner, unless he did unwisely and irregularly undertake it.* So then this

proposition, that by God's laying our sins {582} upon Christ (in some other way, than by imputation of guilt and punishment) he became as completely sinful as we, will not, ought not to be received as the sound doctrine of the gospel. Nor yet this

Second proposition, *That we are as completely righteous as Christ is; or, that Christ is not more righteous than a believer*.

I cannot imagine what should induce any man so to express himself, unless it be a groundless conceit and fancy, that there is an essential transfusion of Christ's justifying righteousness into believers, whereby it becomes theirs by way of subjective inhesion, and is in them in the very same manner it is in him: and so every individual believer becomes as completely righteous as Christ. And this conceit they would fain establish upon that text, 1 John 3.7, "He that doeth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous."

But neither this expression, nor any other like it in the scriptures gives the least countenance to such a general and unwary position. It is far from the mind of this scripture, That the righteousness of Christ is formally and inherently ours, as it is his. Indeed it is ours relatively, not formally and inherently; not the same with his for quantity, though it be the same for verity. His righteousness is not ours in its universal value, though it be ours as to our particular use and necessity. Nor is it made ours to make us so many causes of salvation to others; but it is imputed to us as to the subjects, that are to be saved by it ourselves.

It is true, we are justified and saved by the very righteousness of Christ, and no other; but that righteousness is formally inherent in him only, and is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, but passively ours. He wrought it, though we wear it. It was wrought in the person of God-man for the whole church, and is imputed (not transfused) to every single believer for his own concernment only. For,

(1.) It is most absurd to imagine that the righteousness of Christ should formally inhere in the person of every, or any believer, as it doth in the person of the mediator. The impossibility hereof appears plainly from the incapacity of the subject. The righteousness of Christ is an infinite

righteousness, because it is the righteousness of God-man, and can therefore be subjected in no other person beside him. It is capable of being imputed to a finite creature, and therefore, in the way of imputation we are said to be made *the righteousness of God in him;* but though it may be imputed to a finite creature, it inheres only in the person of the Son of God, as in its proper subject. And indeed,

(2.) If it should be inherent in us, it could not be imputed to us, as it is, Rom. 4.6,23. Nor need we go out of ourselves for {583} justification, as now we must, Phil. 3.9, but may justify ourselves by our own inherent righteousness. And,

(3.) What should hinder, if this infinite righteousness of Christ were infused into us, and should make us as completely righteous as Christ; but that we might justify others also as Christ doth, and so we might be the saviours of the elect, as Christ is? Which is most absurd to imagine. And,

(4.) According to Antinomian principles, What need was there that we should be justified at all? or, What place is left for the justification of any sinner in the world? For, according to their opinion, the justification of the elect is an immanent act of God before the world was; and that eternal act of justification, making the elect as completely righteous as Christ himself, there could not possibly be any the least guilt in the elect to be pardoned; and consequently no place or room could be left for any justification in time. And then it must follow, that seeing Christ died in time, for sin, according to the scriptures; it must be for his own sins that he died, and not for the sins of the elect; diametrically opposite to Rom. 4.25, and the whole current of scripture, and faith of Christians.

It is therefore very unbecoming and unworthy of a justified person, after Christ hath taken all his guilt upon himself, and suffered all the punishment due thereunto in his place and room; instead of an humble and thankful admiration of his unparalleled grace therein, to throw more than the guilt and punishment of his sins upon Christ, even the transgression itself: and comparing his own righteousness with Christ's, to say he is as completely righteous as Christ himself. This is, as if a company of bankrupt debtors, arrested for their own debts, ready to be

cast into prison, and not having one farthing to satisfy, after their debts have been freely and fully discharged by another, out of his immense treasure, should now compare with him, yea, and think they honour him, by telling him, that now they are as completely rich as himself.

I am well assured, no good man would embrace an opinion so derogatory to Christ's honour as this is: did he but see the odious consequences of it, doubtless he would abhor them as much as we. And as for those now in heaven, who fell into such mistakes in the way thither, were they now acquainted with what is transacted here below, they would exceedingly rejoice in the detection of those mistakes, and bless God for the refutation of them.

Error 8: Believers need not fear Sin.

Error 8. They affirm, *That believers need not fear their own sins, nor the sins of others; forasmuch as neither their own, or other sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own good or salvation, or for eternal rewards.*

That we need fear no hurt from sin, or may not aim at our own good in duty, are two propositions that sound harsh in the ears {584} of believers. I shall consider them severally, and refute them as briefly as I can.

Proposition 1. *Believers need not fear their own sins, or the sins of others; because neither our own or others sins can do us any hurt.*

They seem to be induced into this error, by misunderstanding the apostle, in Rom. 8.28, as if the scope of that text were to assert the benefits of sin to justified persons; whereas he speaks there of adversities and afflictions befalling the saints in this life. *Universalis restringenda est ad materiam subjectam, loquitur enim de afflictionibus piorum.* The subject-matter (saith Paræus on the place) restrains the universal expression of the apostle: for when he there saith, "All things shall work together for good;" he principally intends the afflictions of the godly, of which he treats there in that context. It may be extended also to all

providential events; *Omnia quæcunque eis accedunt forinsecus, tam adversa, quam prospera:* All adverse and prosperous events of things without us, as Estius upon the place notes. Nothing is spoken of sin in this text. And the apostle distributing this general into particulars, verse 38, plainly shews what are the things he intended by his universal expression, verse 28, as also in what respect no creature can do the saints any hurt, namely, that they shall never be able "to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in this respect it is true, that the sins of the elect shall not hurt them, by frustrating the purpose of God concerning their eternal salvation; or totally and finally to separate them from his love. This we grant, and yet we think it a very unwary and unsound expression, *That believers need not fear their own sins, because they can do them no hurt:* It is too general and unguarded a proposition to be received for truth. What if their sins cannot do them that hurt, to frustrate the purpose of God, and damn them to eternity in the world to come? Can it therefore do them no hurt at all in their present state of conflict with it in this world? For my part, I think the greatest fear of caution is due to sin, the greatest evil; and that Chrysostom spake more like a Christian, when he said, *Nil nisi peccatum timeo*, I fear nothing but sin. Though sin cannot finally ruin the believer, yet it can many ways hurt and injure the believer, and therefore ought not to be misrepresented as such an innocent and harmless thing to them. In vain are so many terrible threatenings in the scriptures against it, if it can do us no hurt; and it is certain nothing can do us good, but that which makes us better and more holy: But sin can never pretend to that of all things in the world. But to come to an issue, sin may be considered three ways.

1. Formally. 2. Effectively. 3. Reductively.

First, Formally, as a transgression of the preceptive part of the {585} law of God, and under that consideration it is the most formidable evil in the whole world. The evil of evils at which every gracious heart trembles, and ought rather to chuse banishment, prison, and death itself in the most terrible form, than sin, or that which is most tempting in sin, the pleasures of it; as Moses did, Heb. 11.25.

Secondly, Sin may be considered effectively, with respect to the manifold

mischiefs and calamities it produceth in the world, and the spiritual and corporeal evils it infers upon believers themselves: Though it cannot damn their souls, yet it makes war against their souls, and brings them into miserable bondage and captivity, Rom. 7.23. It wounds their souls, under which wounds they are feeble, and sore broken; yea, they roar by reason of the disquietness of their hearts, Psalm 38.5,8. Is war, captivity, festering, painful wounds, causing them to roar, no hurt to believers? It breaks their very bones, Psalm 51.8. And is that no hurt? It draws off their minds from God, interrupts their prayers and meditations, Rom. 7.18-21. And is there no hurt in that? It causeth their graces to decline, wither, and languish to that degree, that the things which are in them are ready to die, Rev. 3.1, and Rev. 2.4. And is the loss of grace and spiritual strength no hurt to a believer? It hides the face of God from them, Isa. 59.2. And is there no hurt in spiritual withdrawments of God from their souls? Why then do deserted saints so bitterly lament and bemoan it? It provokes innumerable afflictions, and miseries which fall upon our bodies, relations, estates; and if sin be the cause of all these inward and outward miseries to the people of God, sure then there is some hurt in sin, for which the saints ought to be afraid of it.

Thirdly, Sin may be considered reductively, as it is over-ruled, reduced, and finally issued by the covenant of grace. Under this consideration of sin, which rather respects the future than present state, the Antinomians only respect the hurt or evil of it; overlooking both the former considerations of sin, which concern the present state of believers, and so rashly pronounce, Sin can do believers no hurt; an assertion tending to a great deal of looseness and licentiousness. A man drinks deadly poison, and is, after many months, recovered by the skill of an excellent physician; shall we say, There was no hurt in it, because the man died not of it? Sure, those fearful twinges he felt, his loss of strength and stomach were hurtful to him, though he escaped with life, and got this advantage by it to be more wary for ever after. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

And then, for other men's sins, (which they say we need not fear) it is an assertion against all the laws of charity; for the sins {586} of wicked men eternally damn them, disturb the peace and order of the world, draw

down national judgments upon the whole community, cause wars, plagues, persecutions, &c. which considerations of the sins of others opened fountains of tears in David's eyes, Psalm 119.136, caused horror to take hold upon him, verse 53, and yet, if you will believe the Antinomian doctrine, believers have no need to fear, much less to be in horror (which is the extremity of fear) for other men's sins. How is Satan gratified, and temptations to sin strengthened upon the souls of men, by such indistinct, unwary, and dangerous expressions as these are? A good intention can be no sufficient salve for such assertions as these.

Secondly, They tell us, 'That as the saints need fear no sin for any hurt it can do them, so they must do no duty for their own *good;* or with an eye to their own salvation, or eternal rewards in heaven.'

Refutation. This, as the former, is too generally and indistinctly delivered. He that distinguisheth well, teacheth well. The confounding of things which ought to be distinguished, easily runs men into the bogs of errors. Two things ought to have been distinguished here;

1. Ends in duties.

2. Self-ends in duties.

First, *Ends in duties;* there are two ends in duties, one *supreme* and *ultimate*, viz, the glorifying of God, which must, and ought to take the first place of all other ends: Another *secondary* and *subordinate*, viz. the good and benefit of ourselves. To invert these, and place our own good in the room of God's glory, is sinful and unjustifiable; and he that aims only at himself in religion, is justly censured as a mercenary servant, especially if it be any external good he aims at; but spiritual good, especially the enjoyment of God, is so involved in the other, viz. the glory of God, that no man can rightly take the Lord for his God, but he must take him for his supreme good, and consequently therein may, and must have a due respect to his own happiness.

Secondly, *Self-ends* must always be distinguished into,

1. Corrupt or carnal self-ends.

2. Pure, and spiritual self-ends.

As to carnal and corrupt self-ends, inviting and moving men to the performance of religious duties; when these are the only ends men aim at, they bewray the hypocrisy of the heart, and accordingly, God charges hypocrisy upon such persons. Hos. 7.14. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds; They assemble themselves for corn and wine," &c. God reckons not the most solemn duties animated {587} by such ends, to be done unto him. Zech. 7.5. "Did ye at all fast unto me?"

But beside these, man hath a best self, a spiritual self, to regard in duty, viz. The conformity of his soul to God in holiness, and the perfect fruition of God in glory. Such holy self-ends as these are often commended, but no where condemned in scripture. It was the encomium of Moses, that "he had respect unto the recompence of reward," Heb. 11.26. These ordinate respects to our spiritual, best self, are so far from being our sin, that God both appoints and allows them for great uses and advantages to his people in their way to glory. They are, (1.) Singular encouragements to the saints under persecutions, straits, and distresses, Heb. 10.34, and to that end Christ proposes them, Luke 12.32, and so the best of saints have made use of them, 2 Cor. 4.17,18. (2.) They are motives and incentives to praise and thankfulness, 1 Pet. 1.3,4. Col. 1.12. (3.) They stir up the saints to cheerful and vigorous industry for God, Col. 3.23,34. 1 Cor. 15.58.

Now to cut off from religion all these spiritual and excellent self-respects, and to make them our sins and marks of hypocrisy, is an error very injurious to the gospel, and to the souls of men. For, (1.) It crosses the strain of the gospel, which commands us to strive for our salvation, Luke 13.24,25. Phil. 2.12. 1 Tim. 4.16. (2.) It blames that in the saints as sinful, which the scripture notes as their excellency, and records to their praise, Heb. 11.26. (3.) It makes the laws of Christianity to thwart, and cross the very fundamental law of our creation, which inclines and obliges all men to intend their own felicity: and on this account, not only our Antinomians are blame worthy, but others also, who are far enough from their opinion, who urge humiliation for sin beyond the staple; teaching men they are not humbled enough, till they be content to be damned. (4.)

It unreasonably supposes a Christian may not do that for his own soul, which he daily doth, and is bound to do for other men's souls, to *pray, preach, exhort,* and *reprove* for their *salvation*.

Error 9: Absolute 'Covenant' of Grace — Confounding the Covenant of Grace and Covenant of Redemption.

Error 9. *They will not allow the new covenant to be properly made with us, but with Christ for us.* And some of them affirm[7], *'That this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition upon our part.' They acknowledge, indeed, faith, repentance, and obedience, to be conditions, but say they are not conditions on our part, but on Christ's; and consequently affirm, that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us.*

Refutation 1. The confounding of distinct covenants leads them {588} into this error; we acknowledge there was a covenant properly made with Christ alone which we call the *covenant of redemption*. This covenant, indeed, though it were made for us, yet it was not made with us: It had its condition, and that condition was laid only upon Christ, viz. That he should assume our nature, and pour out his soul unto death, which condition he was solely concerned to perform; but besides this, there is a *covenant of grace* made with him, and with all believers in him: with him *primarily* as the head, with them as the members, who personally come into this covenant, when they come into the union with him by faith. This covenant of grace is not made with Christ alone, personally considered, but with Christ and all that are his, mystically considered, and is properly made with all believers in Christ; and therefore it is called their covenant, Zech. 9.11, "As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." So when God entered into the covenant of grace with Abraham, Gen. 17.7, "I will establish my covenant (saith he) between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." So when he took the people of Israel into this covenant, Ezek. 16.8, "I sware unto thee, (saith he) and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine."

This covenant of grace made with believers in Christ, is not the same, nor must it be confounded with the covenant of redemption made with Christ before the world began; they are two distinct covenants: For in the covenant of grace, into which believers are taken, there is a Mediator, and this Mediator is Christ himself. But in the other *covenant of redemption*, there neither was, nor could be any Mediator, which manifestly distinguishes them. Besides, in the covenant of grace, Christ bequeaths manifold and rich legacies, as he is the Testator; but no man gives a legacy to himself. This covenant is really and properly made with every believer, as he is a member of Jesus Christ, the head; and they are truly and properly fœderates with God: The covenant binds them to their duties and encourages them therein by promises of strength, to be derived from Christ, to enable them thereunto.

2. We thankfully acknowledge, that the glory of the new covenant is chiefly discovered in the promises thereof; upon the best promises it is established. And all the promises are reducible to the covenant. They meet and center in it, as the rivers in the sea, or beams in the sun; but yet we cannot say, that nothing but promises is contained in this covenant: For there are duties required by it, as well as mercies promised in it.

Nor may we say, that those duties required by it are required only to be performed by Christ, and not by us; but they are required to be performed by us in his strength: Nor is it Christ that {589} repents and believes for us, but we ourselves are to believe and repent in the strength of his grace: and till we do so actually in our own persons, we have no part or portion in the blessings and mercies of this covenant. If Christ by believing for us, give us an actual right and title to the promises and blessings of the new covenant, then it will unavoidably follow:

(1.) That men, who never repented for one sin in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly are pardoned as much as the greatest penitents in the world; because though they never repented themselves, yet Christ repented for them; expressly contrary to his own words, Luke 13.3, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and contrary to his own established order, Luke 29.47. Acts 3.19.

(2.) It will also follow, that unbelievers, who never had union with Christ

by one vital act of faith in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly shall be saved, as well as those that are actual believers: because though they be unbelievers in themselves, yet Christ believed for them; expressly contrary to Mark 16.16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." John 3.36, "He that believes not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And Luke 12.46, "He will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with unbelievers."

(3.) It will also follow from hence, that men may continue in a state of disobedience all their days, and yet may be saved, as well as the most obedient souls in the world; expressly contrary to Eph. 5.6, "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." And Rom. 2.8, "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath." And 1 Pet. 4.17, "What shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?"

This language sounds strange and harsh to the ears of Christians, a repenting Christ saving the impenitent sinner; a believing Christ saving unbelievers; an obeying Christ saving obstinate and disobedient wretches: Whither doth such doctrine tend, but to encourage and fix men in their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience? But the Lord grant no poor sinner in the world may trust to this, or build his hopes of eternal life upon such a loose, sandy foundation, as this is. Reader, all that Christ hath done without thee, will not, cannot be effectual to thy salvation, unless repentance, faith, and obedience, be wrought by the Spirit in thy soul. It is "Christ in thee" that is "the hope of glory," Col. 1.27; beware, therefore, on what ground thou buildest for eternity.

Error 10: Sanctification no Evidence of Justification.

Error 10. *'They deny sanctification to be the evidence of justification, {590} and deridingly tell us, this is to light a candle to the sun; and the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is.'*

Refutation. I am not at all surprised at this strange and absonous [*discordant*] language; it is a false and dangerous conclusion, yet such as naturally results from, and, by a kind of necessity, follows out of their other errors: For if the elect be all justified from eternity, and that neither repentance, faith, nor obedience, be required of us in the covenant of grace; but were all required of, and performed by Christ, who repented, believed, and obeyed for us; then, indeed, I cannot understand what relation our sanctification hath to our justification, or how it should be an evidence, mark, or sign thereof, or what regard is due from Christians to any grace, or work of the Spirit wrought in them, to clear up their interest in Christ to them. For we being in Christ, and in a state of justification, before we were naturally born, we must necessarily be so before we be regenerated, or new-born: and, consequently, no work of grace wrought in us, or holy duties performed by us, can be evidential of that which from eternity was done before them, and without them.

1. I grant, indeed, That many vain professors do cheat, and deceive themselves, by false, unscriptural signs and evidences, as well as by true ones misapplied.

2. I grant also, That by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart, instability of the thoughts, similar works of common grace, in hypocrites; distractions of the world, wiles of Satan, weakness of grace, and prevalency of corruptions; the clearing up of our justification by our sanctification, is a work that meets with great and manifold difficulties, which are the things that most Christians complain of.

3. I also grant, That the evidence of our sanctification in this, or any other method, is not essential, and absolutely necessary to the being of a Christian. A man may live in Christ, and yet not know his interest in him, or relation to him, Isa. 50.10.[8] Some Christians, like children in the cradle, live, but understand not that they live; are born to a great inheritance, but have no knowledge of it, or present comfort in it.

4. I will further grant, That the eye of a Christian may be too intently fixed upon his own gracious qualifications; and being wholly taken up in the reflex acts of faith, may too much neglect the direct acts of faith upon Christ, to the great detriment of his soul.

But all this notwithstanding, The examination of our justification by our sanctification, is not only a lawful, and possible, but a very excellent and necessary work and duty. It is the course that Christians have taken in all ages, and that which God hath abundantly blessed to the joy and encouragement of their souls. {591}

He hath furnished our souls to this end with noble, self-reflecting powers and abilities. He hath answerably furnished his word with variety of marks and signs, for the same end and use. Some of these marks are *exclusive*, to detect and bar bold presumptuous pretenders, 1 Cor. 6.9. Rev. 21.8,27. Some are *inclusive* marks, to measure the strength and growth of grace by, Rom. 4.20. And others are *positive* signs, flowing out of the very essence of grace, or the new creature, 1 John 4.13. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

He hath also expressly commanded us to examine and prove ourselves; upbraided the neglecters of that duty, and enforced their duty upon them by a thundering argument, 2 Cor. 13.5, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves; know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." In a word, for this end and purpose, amongst others, were the scriptures written, 1 John 5.13. "These things have I written to you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And therefore, to neglect this duty is exceeding dangerous; but to deny and deride it, intolerable. It may be justly feared, such men will be drowned in perdition who fall into the waters, by making a bridge over them with their own shadows.

For my own part, I verily believe, that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this world, are when they retire into their closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes, but him that made them; looking now into the *bible*, then into their own *hearts*, and then up to *God;* closely following the grand debate about their interest in Christ, till they have brought it to the happy desired issue.

And now, reader, for a close of all, I call the Searcher of hearts to witness, 'That I have not intermeddled with these controversies of Antipædo-

baptism, and Antinomianism, out of any delight I take in polemical studies, or an unpeaceable contradicting humour, but out of pure zeal for the glory and truths of God; for the vindication and defence whereof I have been necessarily engaged therein. And having discharged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return (if God will permit me) to my much sweeter, and more agreeable studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom I oppose; not doubting but I shall meet those in heaven, from whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon earth."

Footnotes:

1. *August. de Hæres. Tom.* 6. Hæres. 51.

2. *Calv. adversus Libert. c.* 8.

3. As was asserted doctrinally by Tobias Crisp in several passages of his sermons, such as, Sermon 10 on Romans 10.2,3,4; Sermon 19 on Isa. 53.6; Sermon 27 on Isa. 53.6; Sermon 32 on Isa. 41.10; and Sermon 34 on 1 John 2.1,2.—JTKer.

4. Whether the author meant to condemn the first branch of this statement, as well as the second, is not certain, although it seems to be implied. It should be observed however, that the act of Justification may indeed be described as an *immanent and eternal act of God* without inferring therefrom that its relation to temporal events and persons implies a "justification before faith" or personal "justification before themselves or the world had a being." God is eternal, and his every internal act, as such, must also be eternal. But this in no way hinders the Eternal Being from acting upon man, as a creature within time, and that distinctly in the several successive moments of his existence. Thus we understand Mr. Rutherford and Mr. Twisse in an orthodox sense when they affirm that Justification is an eternal act of God; and yet we abhor the errors of those who from this conclude against plain scripture, that sinners are Justified "before faith," or "from eternity."—JTKer.

5. Owen of Justification, p. 183.

6. Owen of Justification, p. 183.

7. *Vide* Saltmarsh of Free Grace, p. 126, 127.

8. *A man may live in Christ, and yet not know his interest in him.*—To many it may seem that the exact opposite of this is an entirely obvious truth. Indeed, to an Antinomian, it may be hard to see how a man may have faith in Christ, and yet not know that he has faith in Christ, given the wrong views and definitions of faith which are embraced even more commonly at the present day. Mr. Flavel however, suggests nothing novel or strange in this statement. His sentiment is assumed in the reasoning of Mr. Guthrie's *Christian's Great Interest*, (see for example page 65 of the Puritan Paperback edition.) Likewise the reader will find the same thing asserted very plainly by John Brown of Wamphray in his *Christ: The Way, the Truth, and the Life*, (page 93 of the 1839 edition): "We would know, that many a man may believe, and yet not know that he doth believe." Now, it is not said that it is ordinarily good for a man to believe or have an interest in Christ, without knowing the fact to be so. But unless we will make justifying faith to terminate in that which is not held forth to it in Scripture, we must acknowledge that our believing unto salvation, and our knowing that we have believed unto salvation, are two distinct separable acts of the Christian's faith.—JTKer.

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ePub and .mobi Editions December 2017 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068